

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of providing a bonus event in the form of a raffle over linked gaming machines, comprising:  
providing a bonus event computer configured for operating a bonus event raffle thereon;  
operably coupling a plurality of gaming machines configured to generate a series of random outcomes in operative communication with said bonus event computer; each of said plurality of gaming machines configured to provide an entry into said bonus event raffle upon an occurrence of at least one predetermined activity associated with that said gaming machine;  
providing an entry into said bonus event raffle upon each said occurrence of said at least one predetermined activity associated with any of said plurality of gaming machines;  
tracking each said entry in a set of said entries, said tracking including storing an identity of a holder of each said entry;  
randomly selecting at least one raffle winning entry from said set of said entries in response to a bonus event trigger; and  
awarding a bonus prize to a holder of said at least one raffle winning entry.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein said tracking of entries is accomplished utilizing said bonus event computer.
3. The method of claim 1, wherein said randomly selecting said at least one raffle winning entry is accomplished utilizing said bonus event computer.
4. The method of claim 1, further including designating each said holder as a gaming machine providing a said entry.
5. The method of claim 4, wherein awarding said bonus prize comprises paying a bonus prize at one of said plurality of gaming machines.
6. The method of claim 1, further including designating said holder as a player making a wager at a gaming machine of the plurality.
7. The method of claim 6, further comprising uniquely identifying said player.

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8. The method of claim 7, further including permitting said uniquely identified player to remove at least one entry from said set of entries and place it in another set of entries to participate in a subsequent bonus event raffle.

9. The method of claim 7, further including permitting said uniquely identified player to retain an entry obtained at a first gaming machine of said plurality while playing at a second gaming machine of said plurality.

10. The method of claim 9, further including selecting said entry obtained at said first said gaming machine as said at least one raffle winning entry and awarding said bonus prize to said uniquely identified player at said second gaming machine.

11. The method of claim 7, further including conducting said bonus event raffle after said uniquely identified player ceases playing a first gaming machine of said plurality of gaming machines and associating said bonus prize with said uniquely identified player.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein awarding said bonus prize comprises crediting said bonus prize to a player tracking account associated with said uniquely identified player.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein awarding said bonus prize comprises awarding said bonus prize to said uniquely identified player upon an initiation of a subsequent session of play by said uniquely identified player.

14. The method of claim 11, further comprising searching said plurality of gaming machines for a current session of play by said uniquely identified player to award said bonus prize.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising selecting an alternate raffle winning entry if said current session of play by said uniquely identified player cannot be located by said searching.

16. The method of claim 7, further comprising configuring said bonus event trigger as a request to be submitted by said uniquely identified player.

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17. The method of claim 16, wherein said bonus event raffle is a limited bonus event raffle, resulting in a bonus prize awarded only if said uniquely identified player is selected as said at least one raffle winning entry.

18. The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one predetermined activity comprises a specific predetermined random outcome of a primary game enabled in response to a wager placed on a gaming machine of said plurality.

19. The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one predetermined activity comprises a wager of a predetermined value being placed on a gaming machine of said plurality.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein said at least one predetermined activity comprises a predetermined number of wagers being placed at a gaming machine of said plurality.

21. The method of claim 1, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a specific predetermined random outcome of a primary game enabled in response to a wager placed on any of said plurality of gaming machines.

22. The method of claim 1, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a predetermined number of wagers being placed collectively on said plurality of gaming machines.

23. The method of claim 1, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises passage of a predetermined amount a time.

24. The method of claim 1, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a preselected time.

25. The method of claim 1, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a request submitted by a player at one of said plurality of gaming machines.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein said bonus event raffle is a limited bonus event raffle, resulting in a bonus prize awarded only when said entry selected as said at least one raffle winning entry is associated with said one gaming machine.

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27. The method of claim 1, wherein said bonus prize is a progressive bonus funded by a percentage of selected wagers placed on said plurality of gaming machines to enable play of a primary game thereon.

28. The method of claim 1, wherein each of said gaming machines of said plurality is configured to continue to provide entries into said bonus event raffle until said bonus event trigger occurs.

29. A method of playing a game of chance, comprising:  
placing a wager with a first gaming machine which is configured for play of a primary game; and  
qualifying for participation in a randomly determined bonus raffle by obtaining an entry upon an occurrence of a specific predetermined activity on said first gaming machine; and  
participating in said randomly determined bonus raffle upon an occurrence of a bonus trigger event.

30. The method of claim 29, further comprising obtaining an additional entry in said randomly determined bonus raffle upon a second occurrence of said specific predetermined activity.

31. The method of claim 29, wherein said specific predetermined activity comprises a specific predetermined random outcome in a primary game enabled responsive to a wager placed on said first gaming machine.

32. The method of claim 29, wherein said specific predetermined activity comprises placing a wager of a predetermined value for play of said primary game on said first gaming machine.

33. The method of claim 29, wherein said specific predetermined activity comprises placing a predetermined number of wagers at said first gaming machine.

34. The method of claim 29, further comprising receiving a bonus raffle prize in said randomly determined bonus raffle, upon selection of said entry.

35. The method of claim 29, wherein a bonus raffle prize is a progressive bonus funded by a percentage of selected wagers placed upon a plurality of said first gaming machines.

36. The method of claim 29, wherein said randomly determined bonus raffle is operated on a bonus event computer in operative communication with said first gaming machine.

37. The method of claim 36, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a specific predetermined random outcome occurring in response to a wager for play of a primary game placed on any of a plurality of gaming machines in operative communication with said bonus event computer.

38. The method of claim 29, further comprising retaining said entry to a bonus raffle event upon leaving said first gaming machine.

39. The method of claim 38, further comprising participating in a later bonus raffle event with said entry retained upon leaving said first gaming machine.

40. The method of claim 38, further comprising participating in said bonus raffle event with said entry retained upon leaving said first gaming machine while playing at a second gaming machine.

41. The method of claim 38, further comprising being awarded a bonus prize in said randomly determined bonus raffle, when said randomly determined bonus raffle is held after leaving said first gaming machine, upon initiating a subsequent session of play upon said first gaming machine.

42. The method of claim 38, further comprising being awarded a bonus prize in said randomly determined bonus raffle after leaving said first gaming machine, when identified as playing a second gaming machine.

43. The method of claim 29, wherein said bonus trigger event comprises a specific predetermined random outcome of said primary game enabled in response to said wager placed on said first gaming machine.

44. The method of claim 29, wherein said bonus trigger event comprises a predetermined number of wagers being placed on a plurality of gaming machines networked with said first gaming machine.

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45. The method of claim 29, wherein said bonus trigger event comprises passage of a predetermined amount a time.

46. The method of claim 29, wherein said bonus trigger event comprises a preselected time.

47. The method of claim 29, wherein said bonus trigger event comprises submitting a request at said first gaming machine.

48. The method of claim 47, wherein said bonus raffle results in a bonus raffle prize being awarded only if said entry is selected to receive a bonus raffle prize in said bonus raffle.

49. A gaming system, comprising:  
a bonus event controller;  
a plurality of gaming units in operative communication with said bonus event controller, each of said plurality of gaming units configured to generate a random outcome in play of a primary game and to provide a qualification to participate in a bonus event raffle upon an occurrence of a predetermined activity.

50. The gaming system of claim 49, wherein each of said gaming units comprises a microprocessor for producing said random outcome.

51. The gaming system of claim 50, wherein said microprocessor comprises a random number generator.

52. The gaming system of claim 49, wherein said plurality of gaming units comprises at least one gaming unit located at each of at least two mutually remotely located sites.

53. The gaming system of claim 49, wherein each of said gaming units is configured to award a raffle bonus prize in response to a command from said bonus event controller.

54. The gaming system of claim 53, wherein said raffle bonus prize is a progressive bonus funded by a percentage of selected wagers placed for play of a primary game upon said plurality of gaming units.

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55. The gaming system of claim 49, wherein each of said gaming units is configured to enable a player thereat making a wager to be uniquely identified.

56. The gaming system of claim 55, wherein each of said gaming units is configured to allow a uniquely identified player to retain a qualification to participate in a bonus event raffle by terminating play prior to a bonus event raffle and to participate in another bonus event raffle using said qualification by restarting a new session of play.

57. The gaming system of claim 55, wherein each of said gaming units is configured to allow a uniquely identified player to retain a qualification to participate in a bonus raffle event acquired on a one of said plurality of gaming units while transferring play to another of said gaming units .

58. The gaming system of claim 55, wherein each of said gaming units is configured to award a uniquely identified player a bonus award obtained in said bonus event raffle during said player's absence, upon a later identification of said uniquely identified player.

59. The gaming system of claim 49, wherein said bonus event controller comprises a bonus event computer.

60. The gaming system of claim 49, wherein said bonus event controller is configured to randomly select at least one raffle winning qualification from a number of qualifications to participate in said bonus event raffle, upon an occurrence of a bonus event trigger.

61. The gaming system of claim 60, wherein said bonus event controller utilizes a microprocessor for randomly selecting said at least one raffle winning qualification.

62. The gaming system of claim 61, wherein said microprocessor comprises a random number generator.

63. The gaming system of claim 60, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a specific predetermined random outcome of a primary game enabled in response to a wager placed on any of said plurality of gaming units.

64. The gaming system of claim 60, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a predetermined number of wagers being placed on said plurality of gaming units.

65. The gaming system of claim 60, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises passage of a predetermined amount a time.

66. The gaming system of claim 60, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a preselected time.

67. The gaming system of claim 60, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a request submitted by a player at one of said plurality of gaming units.

68. The gaming system of claim 67, wherein said bonus event controller is configured to operate said bonus event raffle as a limited bonus event raffle, resulting in a bonus prize awarded only when a qualification occurring on said one of said plurality of gaming units is selected as said at least one raffle winning qualification.

69. The gaming system of claim 60, wherein each of said gaming units is configured to continue to provide entries into said bonus raffle event until said bonus event trigger occurs.

70. The gaming system of claim 49, wherein said predetermined activity comprises a specific predetermined random outcome of play of a primary game enabled in response to a wager placed on one of said plurality of gaming units.

71. The gaming system of claim 49, wherein said predetermined activity comprises a wager of a predetermined value being placed on one of said plurality of gaming units.

72. The gaming system of claim 49, wherein said predetermined activity comprises a predetermined number of wagers being placed on one gaming unit of said plurality of gaming units.

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73. A gaming device comprising:  
a first gaming unit including a random number generator configured to select a random combination of symbols;  
a bonus event controller electronically coupled with said first gaming unit, said bonus event controller configured to conduct a bonus raffle event upon an occurrence of a bonus event trigger, said first gaming unit being configured to provide an entry for participation in said bonus raffle event upon an occurrence of a predetermined activity associated with said first gaming unit.

74. The gaming device of claim 73, wherein said bonus event controller is configured to be networked with at least a second gaming unit.

75. The gaming device of claim 74, wherein said first gaming unit and said second gaming unit are located in at least two mutually remotely located sites.

76. The gaming device of claim 74, wherein said at least a second gaming unit is configured to award a bonus prize to a uniquely identified player, in response to a selection of said entry for participation in said bonus raffle event.

77. The gaming device of claim 76, wherein said first gaming unit and said at least a second gaming unit are configured to award said bonus prize to said uniquely identified player upon initiation of a subsequent session of play thereon, where said entry for participation was selected in said bonus raffle event conducted after said uniquely identified player ended an earlier session of play wherein said entry for participation was obtained.

78. The gaming device of claim 73, further comprising a player tracking card reader associated with said first gaming unit.

79. The gaming device of claim 78, wherein said first gaming unit is configured to award a bonus prize in response to a selection of said entry for participation in said bonus raffle event by crediting said bonus prize to a player tracking card inserted in said player tracking card reader.

80. The gaming device of claim 73, wherein said predetermined activity comprises a specific predetermined random outcome generated by said random number generator in response to a wager placed on said first gaming unit.

81. The gaming device of claim 73, wherein said predetermined activity comprises a wager of a predetermined value being placed on said first gaming unit.

82. The gaming device of claim 73, wherein said predetermined activity comprises a predetermined number of wagers being placed at said first gaming unit.

83. The gaming device of claim 73, wherein said first gaming unit is configured to award a bonus raffle prize in response to a command from said bonus event controller.

84. The gaming device of claim 83, wherein said bonus raffle prize is a progressive bonus funded by a percentage of selected wagers placed upon a plurality of gaming units networked to said bonus event controller.

85. The gaming device claim 73, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a specific predetermined random outcome generated in response to a wager placed on said first gaming unit.

86. The gaming device of claim 73, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a predetermined number of wagers being placed on a plurality of gaming units networked to said bonus event controller.

87. The gaming device of claim 73, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises passage of a predetermined amount of time

88. The gaming device of claim 87, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a predetermined time.

89. The gaming device of claim 73, wherein said bonus event trigger comprises a request input to said first gaming unit.

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90. The gaming device of claim 89, wherein said bonus event controller is configured to convey a command awarding a bonus raffle prize in a bonus raffle event resulting from a request only if an entry associated with the request is selected to receive said bonus raffle prize in said bonus event raffle.

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